

Robert Mullan Cook-Deegan, M.D.
Special Features Editor, Genomics
7717 Goodfellow Way
Derwood, MD 20855
301-869-0066

26 September 1989

Kenichi Matsubara
Institute for Molecular Biology and Cellular Biology
Osaka University
1-3, Yamada-Oka, Suita
Osaka, 565
JAPAN

Dear Dr. Matsubara,

Thank you for your letter of 17 August. I apologize for the delay in replying, but I got your letter only yesterday because the Senate Post Office sent the letter to OTA, which held it for several weeks and sent it back. You sent it to the correct address, but the mail clerk here made a mistake.

I do not believe the problem in Moscow was the absence of a Japanese representative. Dr. Ikawa from Riken was there, and I do not think he had a very good time, because others were asking him what was happening in Japan and he could only say that he would know later.

Since my note to you, I have found several wrinkles in the history of US-Japan relations on genome research. I sincerely hope that they can be ironed out. I have sent the attached letter to science office in the White House to point out potential problems to the new science adviser, D. Allan Bromley. Since Dr. Wyngaarden is likely to work in that office, and he has long supported US-Japan cooperation, perhaps the problems can be solved.

One problem came from discussions in April in Tokyo about the US-Japan Science and Technology Agreement. Japanese officials had listed genome research number 5 on their list, but the US had left it off the list. Janet Dorigan of the White House science office apparently said something to the effect of "the US does not want to cooperate with Japan on the genome project." It was indeed agreed among NIH and DOE that such cooperation should not be part of that particular agreement for fear that it would get bogged down in unnecessary politics and bureaucracy. Perhaps that judgment was in error. What is clear, however, is that scientists in the US do not intend to dictate Japanese policy or to interfere with cooperation with Japan scientifically. Quite to the contrary, they strongly support worldwide sharing of data and materials. There will undoubtedly be areas, such as development of instrumentation, where international cooperation will be difficult, but the STA statement from Japan, OTA and NRC reports in the US, and statements from Valencia and UNESCO make clear that there is complete agreement that map and sequence data should be shared worldwide.

HUGO does indeed need funding from all developed nations. It is the only workable mechanism for international cooperation at the scientific level, and some of the current confusion might have been avoided if HUGO had staff and were serving as the international clearinghouse. HUGO now seems poised to receive funds from several governments and private sources in Europe and North America. Is there a potential Japanese source of funding of Y20-30M/y or so for HUGO, either private or government? HUGO does not need funds in

the range you noted yet, but only enough to begin operation of a Tokyo office (for office space, one or two staff, and a secretary). I will forward your letter to Dr. McKusick who would presumably write any solicitation letters. I will also forward it to Dr. Watson for his information. Do you have any ideas about whom to approach for HUGO funding other than Mombusho, STA, and Ministry of Health and Welfare, and MITI?

I quite agree that communications are a first-order problem that must be solved soon. I will be in Japan next July, and would like to meet with you then if possible. Please let me know if there is any specific information you need or contacts I should make before coming.

I think the other first order problem is to support Japanese scientists in getting sufficient support for their research. Obviously, the first step in doing so is to listen to Japanese scientists about how we could assist them. If there is anything I can do, please let me know.

I also invite you to write up the details of the Japanese genome program for Genomics. Beginning with next month's issue, special features describing various funding programs will begin to appear. I would like to have one on the Japanese efforts, so our readers are aware of your efforts. Please let me know if this would be possible. You could involve Dr. Ikawa, Dr. Watanabe, Dr. Wada, Dr. Soeda, Dr. Shimizu, or any other person or persons you wish.

You asked about the structure of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee. They are having a hearing in several weeks on international efforts on the genome project. The committee "writes the rules" for the National Science Foundation and the part of the Department of Energy that supports genome research. It gives direction to the agencies about the priorities Congress perceives to be important. That particular committee does not have authority over NIH, and it has no funding authority. (Funding comes from a separate set of appropriation committees.) The committee has been quite interested in genome projects from the beginning. They are quite concerned about US economic competitiveness as well, however, and have been concerned about international technology transfer. I do not know what the focus of their hearing will be, but I would guess that US-Japan relations will be a topic. Perhaps your embassy will want to send a representative. I suggested to them that they invite you to testify, but I do not know if they followed that suggestion.

I hope we can quickly work to improve US-Japan relations on the human genome. This is far too important and long-term a project to let it become a focus for controversy.

Sincerely,

Robert Mullan Cook-Deegan, M.D.

cc: Victor McKusick
James Watson
Aki Yoshikawa